

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 120
By Borchert

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Merle Kilgore of Paris.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Merle Kilgore; and

WHEREAS, it is rare for an individual to possess both a highly developed musical talent and a keen business acuity, characteristics which vaulted Merle Kilgore to the pinnacle of the country music industry; and

WHEREAS, one of the most prolific and beloved members of the music industry, Merle Kilgore was an accomplished singer, songwriter, and actor as well as being a successful entertainer and manager; and

WHEREAS, born in Chickasha, Oklahoma, Wyatt Merle Kilgore grew up in Shreveport, Louisiana, he was often to be found in the studios of the *Louisiana Hayride* radio show, where, at the age of fourteen, he carried the guitar of Hank Williams, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, at the age of eighteen, he wrote the song "More and More," which was covered by Webb Pierce and became a number one hit in 1954, the first of many hit songs penned by Mr. Kilgore; and

WHEREAS, he became a member of the *Louisiana Hayride* show and worked as a disc jockey while honing his skills as a songwriter and performer; he again found success with "Johnny Reb," sung by Johnny Horton, and "Love Has Made You Beautiful," his first top ten hit as a solo artist; and

WHEREAS, after moving to Nashville in 1961, Merle Kilgore wrote the Claude King hit "Wolverton Mountain" and then attained stratospheric levels of success and fame with the song "Ring of Fire," which he co-wrote with June Carter Cash. "Ring of Fire" was performed by

Johnny Cash, and sold more than 16 million records; throughout his life, he was a prodigious songwriter who penned more than 300 songs which sold close to 50 million records; and

WHEREAS, his musical career was marked by success and found him touring with Hank Williams, Jr. in 1964, and recording such memorable records as *Dear Mama*, his first top ten album, *42 in Chicago*, *Fast Talking Louisiana Man*, *Mr. Garfield*, and *Guilty*; and

WHEREAS, shortly after his move to Nashville, Merle Kilgore became the manager of the Al Gallico and Shapiro Bernstein music companies; he was named general manager of Hank Williams, Jr.'s publishing companies in 1969, beginning a business affiliation that was to last more than thirty years; and

WHEREAS, in 1986, Mr. Kilgore was named Executive Vice President and head of management of Hank Williams, Jr. Enterprises, and he served as Hank Williams, Jr.'s personal manager for the last sixteen years of their collaboration; and

WHEREAS, his performing abilities were not limited to music, however; Merle Kilgore garnered roles and turned in fine performances in several films, including *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Robert Altman's *Nashville*, *W.W. and the Dixie Dance Kings*, *Roadie*, *Willa*, and *Living Proof*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kilgore held leadership positions in several prominent country music industry organizations; he was a member of the Country Music Association's Board of Directors, also serving as CMA's Vice President, offered sterling service as the President of both the Nashville Songwriter's Foundation and the Nashville Songwriter's Association International, and served two terms as President of Reunion of Professional Entertainers, International; and

WHEREAS, Merle Kilgore was also a member of the Academy of Country Music, the Screen Actors Guild, NSAI, and the American Federation of Musicians and was a board member of the Hank Williams Museum, the Texas Hall of Fame, and the Tex Ritter Museum; and

WHEREAS, he was named an honorary State Senator for Tennessee in 1987, was inducted into the Louisiana Hall of Fame and the Byrd High School Hall of Fame in 1993, and was recognized by the North American Country Music Association with the Legendary Songwriter's Award in 1998; and

WHEREAS, Merle Kilgore was deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, he enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, Judy Kilgore, and was the proud father of Steve Kilgore, Duane Kilgore, Pam Compton, Kim Pomeroy, and Shane McBee; and

WHEREAS, he will be sorely missed by his eight grandchildren and one great-granddaughter; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kilgore leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional musician and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Merle Kilgore, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character, his extraordinary talent, and his indelible impact upon the country music industry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Merle Kilgore.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.